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That it was primarily German poets and scholars who concerned themselves in detail with Lithuanian folk poetry is explained on the one hand by the close relation of the two peoples, on the other hand by the influence which the romanticism of the eighteenth century exercised on German poetry. Thus one can rightly speak of a Lithuanian contribution to German spiritual life.

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5. The Lithuanian Folk Song in German Poetry

Around the end of the seventeenth century we hear for the first time from German sources details concerning Lithuanian folk poetry. Around the year 1690 Theodor Lepner, one time pastor in Ragnit, wrote his notable little book: Der Preusche Litauer. It was dedicated to the Electoress Sophie-Charlotte and appeared in 1744 in Danzig. The book is of special cultural-historical interest because Lepner, who in general--this may be added--did not at all esteem the Lithuanians, gives a quite drastic picture of Lithuanian folk customs. He writes: "They have a peculiar type of trumpet or trombone which they call truba. This is made out of fir, with a hollow at the end, fairly /66/ wide and round like a trombone, on the outside tightly wound around with birch bark, over a fathom long. Two kerdels blow on such trombones at the same time, which makes quite a noise. Otherwise they have what the Germans call pig's head (kanklis --a type of zither), strung with nine or twelve brass strings, the drum, the fife and other flutes, a fiddle, and a bass iron; this only they buy at the store, the other pieces mentioned they all make themselves. Such artists are they!

"They are also all composers who give the melodies to their songs themselves, although they have also learned some from the Germans. They are inclined by nature to singing, and are thus fine musici naturales who brought with them into the

- 181 They are industrious, peace-loving, and unassuming people, described by ancient chroniclers as "rough but pious." Since time immemorial and ever spiritually attuned to nature, they have built their entire culture upon a natural basis. Like the Letts, who are related to them, they live to a great extent in a "wood age" which is very ancient but for that reason no less many-sided, skillful, and
- 342 sensible. The houses are made of wood; their foundation beams rest on the bare soil or on field boulders. The roof at one time probably consisted of spruce bark, as the covering sheets for the peat still do today; but now the roof is made of straw which is held on to the ridge by ridge rid. In front of the door there is usually placed a narrow porch with a gabled roof and with little benches to the right and to the left. Formerly the houses had only one room, smoking-room style, but now they usually have a tripartite division with entrance hall in the middle, and living room and bedroom to the right and the left of it. The floor consists of
- 352 a loam coating or of boarding. The furniture consists of wall benches, loose benches, well-carved solid chairs, a table, wall boards, and pine-
- 353 wood splinter holders; on the walls are hung pictures of saints, frequently portraits of the old Lithuanian rulers, and, symptomatic for the
- 343 great amount of emigration, photographs from America. Aside from the living quarters, granaries (klete), barns, stables, wells, and bath
- 515 house belong to the Lithuanian farmstead. In the bath house they bathe in steam which rises from heated stones on which the water is poured. This, incidentally, is also the way the Indians do it. The bather lies on a bench and cools and massages himself at the same time by means
- 412 of a cluster of birch twigs which he dips in fresh water. The hand-operated mill is a very ancient instrument. It has one stationary and
- [231] one turning stone in a wooden box. Likewise ancient is the beehive made of a hollow tree stem--bee keeping is the most original native and the most highly developed form of the collecting economy, which is here, as among the Letts, universally practiced and skillfully cultivated--; ancient, too, is the zoche, the plow with the forked share, which, as late as the 16th century, was made entirely of wood, and which even
- 534 today is completely wooden except for the iron shoe; just like the harrows with branches tied to them, and the snowshoes made of hollowed-out oak boards tied under the foot. Ancient, also, are the musical instruments: the nine-stringed kanklys, the truba made of a birch branch cut lengthwise, hollowed out, and tied together again; the short reed pipe, the trapezoid shaped cymbal, the stringed zither made of an osier switch, played with a bow fashioned in the same way; with a resonator

[534] consisting of a pig's bladder, the long shepherd's horn.--The Lithuanian
535 is very gifted musically as well as poetically. His folk songs, the dainos, present in brief, firm trochaic measures and in soft iambs the sincere and heart-felt, vividly experienced joys and sorrows of a sensitive human soul which tends towards melancholy. These songs have frequently been translated, and they were greatly appreciated by Herder and Goethe. The latter reproduced a daina in his musical play, Die Fischerin. The tenderness and fervor of the folk poetry is repeated in the appearance and the mood of the graveyards. Their silent seclusion along mountain slopes and on hilltops, their--romantically neglected --enclosures of flowers and creepers, their enormous, dark, and forcibly admonitory Golgotha crosses and moss-covered crucifixes with the instruments of torture, the sight of which and the walk through which, make them into veritable experiences. In spite of all the neglect, one is conscious here that the Lithuanian is close to his dead, even if such customs have disappeared, as still existed during the 16th century, according to which the deceased was placed fully dressed on a chair and wailing women were made to sing songs of mourning around him.

/31: Illustrations./

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The Lithuanians.

II.

- 000 1. Lithuanian farmer. 2. Costume of the 17th century. 3. Costume of the 19th century. 4. Tub. 5. Earthenware pot. 6. -10 Pots. 11. Spoon. 12. Ladle. 13. 14. Salt grinders. 15. Pouch made of birch bark used for collecting berries. 16. Butter tub made of a hollowed-out stem. 17. Chair with a perforated back. 18. Spoons. 19. Flax-scutcher and basket made of straw-ropes used to store grain.

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[322] It is of course impossible for the Lithuanian wood culture to remain exclusively such today. Stampers and grinders and the tankards for the ancient native barley beer are still fashioned in the completely original manner by being worked out of a solid block and hollowed out. But, however much this is true, and, however much birch bark is still used, there exists, nevertheless, home-made earthenware, next to the wood products, especially in the fringe areas. But even the
1/ For illustrations, see 1: Karutz, E1 Europe, cat. 16, p. 22a--
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